

TEMP JOB G

DRAFT

April 22, 1983

The Honorable Bill Clinton
Governor, State of Arkansas
State Capitol Building
Little Rock, Arkansas

Dear Governor Clinton:

Our states share many valuable resources. One of the most important and fragile are the waters of the Ozarkian uplift of northwestern Arkansas and northeastern Oklahoma. Of primary concern and great public interest is the Illinois River, a recreational jewel to both states. In the past few years significant deterioration in the quality of the River has occurred. This has produced a great concern in Oklahoma and has resulted in many meetings, forums, and at least one lawsuit.

Many of our state agencies have been studying the problem and making recommendations. They include: the Scenic Rivers Commission; State Department of Health; State Department of Agriculture; Department of Pollution Control; and the State Attorney General. Of particular note is the Water Resources Board which has been conducting an intensive study of Lake Frances for the past two years. All these agencies have attended a series of coordination meetings with corollary agencies in your state. To date, little actual change in the rate of deterioration of the River has occurred.

The results of the Lake Frances project along with monitoring results and other long-term studies indicate that most of the contamination is the direct result of man's activities in the watershed of both states. Increased treatment costs to public drinking water supply has resulted to Siloam Springs. Of specific concern are the municipal effluents being discharged into tributaries of the river. Current data indicate

TEMP JOB G

DRAFT

that 90% of the nutrients reaching Lake Frances are directly attributable to the towns of Springdale and Rogers. Other pollutant sources (both point and nonpoint) exist in the basin but generally are of lesser concern.

The answer to saving Lake Frances and restoring the lake for suitable use for the public and area citizens of Arkansas and Oklahoma evidently lies with a solution to these problem discharges.

The problems of water quality in Lake Frances are indicative of a more serious problem. Although the problems in Lake Frances manifested themselves sooner and in a more extreme fashion than the problems that are occurring downstream from Lake Frances, the entire Illinois River is degrading at an alarming rate which has brought about a decreased usage of the River. This has impacted the river's tourism and public recreation benefits. The river is becoming so green that the bottom of the river cannot be seen in most locations.

Another concern which is already taking effect is the water quality of Lake Tenkiller. The upper areas of the lake are starting to show signs that are characteristic of an accelerated rate of eutrophication.

The state of the Illinois River is serious. This river has a history of being a high quality water course and is a Scenic River as designated in 82 O.S., §1452.

I think the time is here to evaluate the concerns of both states for the future of the Illinois River. I pledge the efforts of the people of Oklahoma toward improving the river. Please join us in this effort. Coordination of the technical, social, and financial implications is sorely needed. Several options exist that I would like for you to consider. These include: 1) an active assessment and involvement by the Arkansas River Compact Commission; 2) reactivation of the interstate coordination meetings by respective state agencies; 3) a special task force supported by the Governors of both states to address the problem; and 4) contractual arrangements with a private firm, acceptable to both states, to address the problem.

TEMP JOB G

DRAFT

The time for action is now, before an important resource is gone.
Please let me know your thoughts on this problem.

Sincerely,

George Nigh
Governor, State of Oklahoma